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DE RUEHHK #0325/01 0681543
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3202
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTJ HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000325

DEPT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C, CA/OCS
NSC FOR MGA VIN AND CHUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: GOS HARASSMENT OF EXPELLED NGO STAFF

REFS: A) KHARTOUM 318
B) KHARTOUM 315

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In meetings at the UN and at USAID, NGO officials outlined a systematic campaign by the Government of Sudan to seize assets and harass staff of the NGOs expelled in the wake of the ICC announcement on March 4. Post will continue to protest the harassment of NGOs and Amcits to GoS officials, and has offered assistance to NGO staff members as they depart the country. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) On March 8, 2009, CDA and conoff attended meetings at UNMIS and USAID with UN officials, Chiefs of Mission, Consular officers, and NGO Country Directors to discuss the harassment of NGOs and their staffs, following the expulsions of thirteen international NGOs by the GoS. They recounted numerous cases of GoS officials entering NGO compounds to seize NGO assets and personal property, as well as ongoing difficulties facing NGO workers attempting to leave, but whose passports are held by security officials. Expatriates working for these NGOs have been intimidated by GoS from contacting their Embassies for assistance, as HAC routinely increases pressure on NGOs who reach out to an Embassy for support.

3. (SBU) NGO officials recounted several cases of armed security officers entering compounds to seize assets, then squabbling amongst themselves for the spoils. A PADCO representative stated that GoS Customs officials and (Humanitarian Affairs Commission) HAC officers appeared at the NGO office and began to fight over who would get the vehicles. An ACF employee said, "Our office was taken on the 5th at lunchtime. Police and HAC were fighting over who should get our mini-bus". After seizing vehicles from CHF, security officials demanded that the NGO fill up the gas tank before they drove off. Save the Children USA's El Geneina, Darfur warehouse was raided by men in uniform driving large trucks who carried off 6-8 months of medical supplies intended for IDPs donated by AMERICARES.

4. (SBU) None of the NGOs were given a legal justification for these seizures and were informed that the 2006 Protocol governing GoS obligations to NGOs does not apply, as the ICC created a state of emergency. The NGOs have been informed that they must pay varying lengths of extended severance pay, averaging 6-7 months, to their national staff. At the same time, GoS has frozen the NGOs' bank accounts, making it difficult for them to transfer money to Sudan. HAC officials have directed NGOs to transfer the severance pay directly to the GoS, and claim that GoS will issue the pay to the local employees. NGO officials remaining in Khartoum to facilitate this cash transfer expressed concern that these funds will not end up in the hands of their employees. The NGOs are attempting to negotiate a mechanism to comply with the GoS demand to provide severance pay, while securing some assurance that the money will actually end up in the hands of the now-unemployed national staff.

5. (SBU) While many expatriate staff of the expelled NGOs have already departed Sudan, some NGO officials, including Country Directors, have had to remain until their assets have been transferred to the GoS and report feeling as if they are "held hostage". C-Edra(Haq,OUN Hum ni4apien AoordinitOrntf\$ hgTQ&xoywjo kQr stayudjmun&dWm&|nct&Qi}pQ::AF!c\$ogc,sQeQh}z2g QYpc3wsTtc}6wadfQvo%1-hh demanded by the GoS. Passports have been taken from at least four French Solidarities employees and four Canadians NGO workers. The passport of the Country Director of PADCO, an Iraqi national, has also been seized, as have passports of Kenyan and Croatian PADCO employees. One Canadian NGO official was allegedly informed that if he did not cooperate and turn over money and assets of his NGO, he could be arrested and tried in connection with the ICC proceedings.

6. (SBU) To Embassy Khartoum's knowledge, at least three US passports are being held by GoS officials, including passports belonging to Amcit employees of Mercy Corps and CHF, though the Mercy Corps passports are expected to be released soon. An additional passport belonging to an IOM employee has been pending issuance of an exit visa for one week, though this may be a result of GoS disorganization rather than malevolence. Some NGO Directors have reported that exit visas for departing staff are now being issued quickly. One passport belonging to CHF Country Director John DeStefano (protect) is being held by HAC until the transfer of assets from CHF to HAC is completed. Mr. DeStefano is considering whether he would like the US Embassy to weigh in with the GoS directly regarding his case, but like many NGO workers, is concerned that the GoS will treat him worse should the Embassy intervene.

KHARTOUM 00000325 002 OF 002

7. (SBU) The GoS has routinely punished foreign aid workers for reaching out to their embassies. When CDA protested the February, 2009 seizure of assets of USAID funded PADCO, HAC Director Hassabo responded by expelling PADCO's country director (reftel). (NOTE: Embassy Khartoum has submitted request to revoke visa issued to Hassabo in July 2008. CA/VO is currently determining applicable grounds for the revocation. END NOTE.) The Norwegian Consul reports that the Norwegian Refugee Council was punished for contacting the Norwegian Embassy to report harassment of its staff. After the meeting at UNMIS, an OCHA official told conoff that most harassment taking place is not reported to Embassies by NGOs for fear of GoS retribution and that many Amcits affected by the harassment have refrained from contacting the Embassy.

18. (SBU) NGO officials have reported that their national staff have faced GoS pressure and intimidation and are highly vulnerable as the NGOs depart, particularly if GoS will be in control of their severance pay. The GoS has already declared that it will investigate alleged wrong-doing of the expelled NGOs and has called in national staff of several NGOs for daily questioning. Save The Children USA reports that security officials have been in camps asking which of their national staffers had reported instances of rape. ACF has reported instances of national staff being detained and beaten by security officials.

19. (SBU) Comment: CDA has repeatedly raised the issue of NGO expulsion and harassment with high level officials in the GoS. Conoff will arrange meeting with Head of Consular Affairs at MFA for CDA to protest the harassment of Amcits and seizure of passports. Post has updated the Sudan Travel Warning to note increase in harassment of Amcits, which has been submitted to CA for clearance. Conoff is contacting MFA on behalf of Amcits in specific cases when the Amcit requests Embassy representation, and has offered assistance to international NGO staff when they are departing Sudan to try to limit harassment to the extent possible. End comment.

FERNANDEZ